

- ☑ Don't forget to turn your clocks ahead one hour Sunday, April 6, 2003, 2 a.m.
- ☑ Col. Charles Brown celebrates 30th year release from the Hanoi Hilton (back page)
- ☑ Westover Neighbor shows Red, White and Blue

Hours of operation

Flyers Inn

Lodging desk 24/7
Commercial 413-593-5421
DSN: 589-2700/base Ext. 2700

Chapel Center

Chaplain available 24/7
Pager: 413-785-3195, base Ext. 3031

Fitness Center

Monday-Friday, 5:30 a.m.-8 p.m.
Saturday (non-UTA), 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Sunday (non-UTA), closed
UTA Saturdays, 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
UTA Sundays, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Bowling Center

Monday-Friday lunch and bowling,
11 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Westover Consolidated Club

Breakfast: 6-8 a.m. until Thursday
lunch, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
dinner, 5-8 p.m.

Westover Dining Facility

Breakfast, daily, 5-8 a.m.,
\$1.60 for those on per diem,
UTA status - free
Midnight meals, 11 p.m.-1 a.m.
boxed meals provided daily

Family Support Center

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday of A UTA,
9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Saturday of B UTA, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
closed Sunday of B UTA

Legal Office

Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Base Exchange

Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Shoppette

Monday-Saturday 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Barber Shop (next to BX)

Tuesday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
closed Sundays

Daily Base Shuttle

Every 15 minutes at meal times to the
club, dining facility, Hangar Avenue,
supply, and bowling center.

Wing command post is best in AFRC

Article and photo

by SSgt. Andrew Biscoe

From Westover to Afghanistan, they put in 24 hours' worth of hard work each day.

It finally paid off for the men and women of the Patriot Wing Command Post. The 12-member staff of reservists, who link the heart and soul of Westover's flying operations, recently won the honors as best command post of the year in the large manning category for 2002 in Air Force Reserve Command.

The award recognized 365 days of the most demanding workload ever for SMSgt. Joe Fitzgibbon, Command Post superintendent, and the staff. Besides the 24-hour commitment to Westover, they volunteered for worldwide deployments half of a world away for Operation Enduring Freedom.

On top of all that, 2002 was Westover's busiest year since Operation Desert Storm in 1991. The award cited the Command Post's support of 6,973 flying hours, and more than 450 C-5 launches from the base, averaging more than 40 launches per month.

The controllers did their jobs so well that they received accolades from their superiors all across the globe. That combination proved to be the difference in the award, said Capt. Elaine Chaloux, mobilized officer in charge. And she said it was Fitzgibbon who led the way. "He has a lot on his hands," Chaloux said. "He is a hard worker. He and the staff got all kinds of kudos when they deployed, too — from commanders at deployed locations and from AMC."

Westover command post controllers don't have a lot of time these days to savor their award. They are kept busy by a record number of C-5s transiting Westover as the 24-hour stage operation enters its third month. Not long ago, eight generations of aircraft, with 10 recoveries was the norm. That's all changed with the massive movement of troops and cargo through Westover for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We're at about 14 generations and 18 recoveries per day now," Fitzgibbon said.

To help handle the work, Fitzgibbon recently brought on two augmentees from the command post at Dover AFB, Del. A1C Danielle McGhee and Amn. Tiffany Toatley arrived in early March and will be here for three months.

"I like everything about this job," Toatley said. "I like knowing that I am a part of the



Amn. Tiffany Toatley, right, an operations controller augmentee from Dover AFB, Del., and SSgt. Shelley Foust, command post controller, establish communication with transiting C-5 aircrews.

mission that's carrying helicopters and tanks." Fitzgibbon said Toatley has acclimated quickly with all that has to be learned at a new base. That's quite an adjustment for a new airman who has only been an operations controller for seven months.

Toatley and a C-5 pilot used the jargon that helps speed important communication along as a male voice suddenly modulated into one of the many command post's consoles. "Zero-one-one, you're Lima Charlie. How me?" Toatley answered. "Lima Charlie," the pilot responded, as the crew confirmed the transmission was loud and clear.

Toatley's transmissions are only part of the crucial communication hub that senior staff and aircrews rely on. About three hours away from landing at Westover, aircrews make their first contact with these professionals to make sure all is ready once the wheels hit the runway. Toatley and everyone in the command post must have the mental discipline to handle many tasks at once. In addition to contact with aircrews, the command post also oversees COMSEC operations, classified communications (SIPRANET) transmissions, secure areas, and classified information.

"The Command Post isn't for everyone," Chaloux said. "You have to be able to handle a certain amount of stress, and have situ-

(continued on next page)

Command... (Continued)

ational awareness." They must ensure all messages from higher headquarters reach the wing commander as quickly as possible. The Command Post also teams with the air terminal operations center (ATOC), transient alert, maintenance, base operations, and the unit control center in the 337th Airlift Squadron to ensure all flying operations run smoothly.

The controllers can't juggle multi-tasking 24 hours a day without a break, Fitzgibbon said. To ease tension, the staff tries to balance an intense military atmosphere and the inherent discipline with the job with a sense of. "We focus on rapport and humor on the job," he said. "And we just try to work together as effectively as possible to try to get the aircraft and crews married up and on their way."

Brig. Gen. Martin M. Mazick, 439th AW commander, said the award was well-earned. "Our wing command post has proven their dedication and professionalism with their exemplary performance throughout 2002," he said. "The members of our command post team have a proven track record at home and overseas. This command-level award could not be more deserved."

Pat Stats

Served since Feb. 2, 2003
3,399 passengers - 952 aircraft
12,181,900 pounds of cargo
Info from MSgt. Jim Garrity, 42APS

Meals

4,979 hot meals served
Box lunches: 3,954
Info from TSgt. David Beauregard, 439SVS

Fuel since Feb. 1
5,798,424 gallons of JP-8
info from Jim Maloney, fuels

PATRIOT express

Contact us:
DSN:589-2020 - (413) 557-2020
www.afrc.af.mil/439aw
439patriot.editor@westover.af.mil

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Across 30 years, ex-POW is cheered

by SMSgt. Sandi Michon

As U.S. prisoners-of-war await their fate in Iraq, Col. Charles A. Brown, 439th maintenance group commander recalled the end of his own POW experience 30 years earlier.

On April 1, 1973, a young, gaunt Capt. Brown walked off the C-9 onto Westover's tarmac after spending 101 days as a prisoner of war at the "Hanoi Hilton" after his B-52 was hit by a missile over Hanoi Dec. 19, 1972.

Base personnel commemorated the homecoming anniversary with a surprise ceremony. After the applause ebbed, Brown was quick to say, "The real heroes are the ones who didn't come home."

Brown's experience as a POW takes on renewed significance in light of current events in Iraq. "It brings back old memories," said the soft-spoken logistics commander. His most vivid memory is the first day of confinement – the transition from an active combatant to a prisoner. "The first day is the most dangerous," he said, and explained that prior to confinement, most POWs first survive a firefight, and other forms of enemy brutality. Brown was televised as a POW in Vietnam and he posited that it may have saved his life. "If you end up on camera, you generally get released because of the increased accountability it creates," he explained. "In a larger sense, it's more dangerous to not appear on camera."

Brown sees similarities between North Vietnam and Iraq. "Both situations involve dictators that have little value for human life," he said. He also saw the parallels of anti-war sentiments as damaging to the mission and to the morale of U.S. troops. "Peter Arnett [former NBC reporter] reminds me of Hanoi Jane," said Brown.

Three decades have helped heal the psychological pain of his POW confinement, but Brown says his experiences also helped him

focus on what's important. "You find you place greater emphasis on relationships," he said, and added that his faith played a role in his survival. As they "tapped" GBA (God Bless America) on cell walls, they also knew what time of day it was by counting the bell tolls from the Hanoi Catholic church nearby. "They constantly fed us lies over the radio, but my faith helped me know they were just lies," he said.

Many base personnel shook Brown's hand, and thanked him again for his service. Brown is one of the few former Vietnam POWs still actively serving in the military. "I remember seeing his skinny face in the C-9 window when it taxied into the parking ramp at Westover," said CMSgt. George Kudla, 439th AMDS superintendent of medical administration. "He asked how the Boston Bruins were doing," Kudla recalled amid good-natured laughter.

Brown has nearly 35 years military service and is serving in his third war. "I think I'm closer to the end of my career than at the beginning," he quipped.

Dear General Mazick

I wanted to send this letter to let you know that I support all of the American men and women who serve not only at Westover but our armed forces through out the world.

The way I am showing my support for them is by fastening an American Flag to the roof of my house. I realize it may be like finding a needle in a haystack, but it is illuminated and can only be seen from the air.

My hope is that a pilot, a support person, or just a passenger can look out their window and see the flag as they land or take off from Westover. I truly hope that those who do see it will realize my support, because the flag is there for them.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Alves, A Patriot from Ludlow.

PS: God bless all the fine American men and women who fight to keep us free.



Brown

Express-ions

